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SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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May 7, 1969

DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION  
665 HUNTINGTON AVENUE  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02115

Professor Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics  
Stanford University  
Palo Alto, California

Dear Professor Lederberg:

It is difficult to learn from your piece in the May 3 issue of Saturday Review whether you favor or oppose fluoridation. I have not seen your "two columns" from which this piece was put together by Mr. Lear and perhaps your views are more clearly stated in these columns.

In the Saturday Review article you write ..."For those of us who see a benefit from ...(fluoridation)." I assume from that statement you support fluoridation. However, you also wrote. "My own summary judgement would be to acquiesce in a community decision for fluoridation, with regrets ...." That seems to imply you are opposed to fluoridation.

We certainly agree with your comment about our "lack of basic knowledge" of fluoride and its interaction with calcium, magnesium, and a couple of dozen other physiologic reactions, but we do know that some 7 million Americans have drunk naturally fluoridated water for generations with no discernible ill effects. Another 80 million Americans have drunk water with the fluoride level adjusted to 1 ppm for brief periods to nearly 25 years with no discernible effects. Let us keep pressing for more basic research but at the same time not deny society the advances of this safe and effective development in modern public health.

When you were discussing hemodialysis in patients with uremia you did not, unfortunately, discriminate between these two types of patients (i.e., those with uremia who are dialyzed and those who are not). As we pointed out in our article, the difference is important, for only those patients undergoing dialysis with fluoridated water bear the risk (and perhaps, in certain cases, the benefits) of bony fluoridation.

I realize that you did not select Mr. Lear's caption to your piece ("Another Opinion on Fluoridation - We Need More Research") but this is already being used by "local antis" in claiming that another Nobel Prize winner opposes fluoridation. Not knowing Mr. Lear except via his writings, my guess is that that is exactly what he hoped for, and that you probably did not know your piece would follow ours, or did you? Mr. Lear's brief rebuttal was certainly

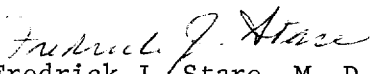
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a weasely retraction of his flamboyant bravado in his March 1 piece.

If you care to make a brief, clear-cut statement as to whether you support or oppose fluoridation, we would appreciate having it.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

  
Fredrick J. Stare, M. D.  
Professor of Nutrition  
Chairman, Department of  
Nutrition

FJS:vs